

## MINUTES

Heywood Meadow Stewardship Committee Meeting

Thursday January 14, 2021

Via Zoom

Present: Delia Kaye (Natural Resources Director), Joanne Gibson (Co-Chair), Susan Clark (Co-Chair), Murray Nicolson, Sandy Smith (minutes), Cris van Dyke, Mary Clarke, Lola Chaisson, Stan Lucks

Guest: Nancy Nelson

The meeting was called to order by Joanne Gibson, Co-Chair, at 9:08am.

**Minutes of December 10, 2020 Meeting:** On a motion made by Cris van Dyke and seconded by Lola Chaisson, the minutes were approved unanimously.

### **Continuation of Review of Goals from the 2005 “Landscape and Preservation Plan for Heywood Meadow”:**

Goal 6: Enhance the Meadow’s scenic and contemplative qualities and highlight its historical relationship with adjacent 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century structures and roads, especially the historic Bay Road (Lexington Road) and Potter’s Street (Heywood Street).

Joanne Gibson began the discussion by saying she reviewed and found page 16 of the Plan very helpful because it reminds us the Meadow is a cultural landscape – it belonged to the people whose homes bordered the Meadow and it was they who viewed it from their homes, farmed it and kept their animals on it. Susan Clark felt that what trips us up is that Lexington Road has changed so much over the years – both in elevation and traffic volume - that the relationship between the Meadow and the houses that border it has broken down and it is nostalgic to think we can reconnect them. Joanne felt that the landscape of a house is what defines it just as much as its architecture, and she reminded the Committee that one way we have tried to maintain the relationship between the houses and the Meadow is to protect the perimeter of the Meadow from the sidewalk extension and the proliferation of signage. Nancy Nelson suggested the Committee identify what views are important and insure they are not occluded. She also suggested the Committee should be mindful of the parcels across Lexington Road, one of which is conservation land and the other is municipal land.

The Committee then embarked on a discussion of whether to add the Walden Street parcel to the adjoining historic district(s). After discussion, it was determined that the Walden Street lot is already part of the American Mile Historic District, and that the latter runs down Walden Street past the Police and Fire Station to the road into the Concord Ice property. It includes the land on which the Police and Fire Station is situated. Delia pointed out the location of the right-of-way (ROW) on the north side of Walden Street.

Cris asked about the protective setback from the Mill Brook and whether it would stand in the way if the Committee chose to actively manage the invasives between the Brook and Walden Street. Delia agreed there is a 100' protected zone, but felt the Committee could, nevertheless, make major improvements along the Brook by developing an invasives management plan which could be overseen by the Town's Land Manager. Nancy asked about invasives on the north side of the Brook and Delia noted that John Bakewell had been working to remove them, but that he had recently moved to Vermont and would probably only be available for another year before the Committee would need to explore other options.

Susan and Joanne brought the discussion back to Goal 6. Susan inquired how much else the Committee could do other than keeping up the Meadow, not occluding the views, and installing appropriate benches and the occasional apple tree. Cris asked if the Committee could make part of the Meadow look like an old orchard. Susan recalled the Committee tried to plant some apples on the east meadow several years ago, but they were too little and didn't survive. Nancy wondered if the location of the apple trees hadn't been made up, and suggested the Committee should develop an over-arching strategy for the Meadow to avoid the impulse to locate a tree here or there at the preference of the Committee without supporting documentation. Joanne recalled the effort made prior to the Landscape Plan to plant a small orchard on the west meadow. The Committee went to the effort of having John Bunker, an apple expert from Maine, consult on the project, but the consultants on the Landscape Plan asked that the trees be removed, so they were given to Orchard House.

Mary asked if there was any history of apples on the Meadow and Joanne assured her there have been apples on the Meadow for at least 50 years. Susan remembered the Plan mentions an orchard, and Joanne referred the Committee to an entry on page 16 (Landscape Character). This section states that the "enduring landscape character of Heywood Meadow...is its quality as an open meadow" and goes on to say "other features including...vegetable gardens, tilled fields, orchards...have occupied Heywood meadow at various times but do not have the same enduring quality." She suggested the Committee not cut down the remaining apple trees, but not plant additional ones. Delia pointed to the recommendation at the bottom of page 21 of the Plan, Perimeter Trees, which says: "Remove nursery trees. Perform periodic maintenance on mature apple trees but do not replace." She suggested starting to maintain the existing apple trees by pruning them regularly. Susan reminded the Committee the apples were pruned several years ago, but that bluebirds like the dead wood of apple trees. Nancy observed that scruffy looking apple trees are likely more historic, and that there is evidence that fruit trees used to be planted about 40 feet apart to discourage transmission of fungus.

Mary referred to the same section of the Plan which makes the point that trees were planted on the perimeter of the Meadow to separate the road and the land. Joanne said that additional trees shouldn't be planted along the perimeter because doing so would risk blocking the views of the Meadow and disrupting the visual connection between the Meadow and the surrounding historic houses such as the Reuben Brown House, the Heywood-Beaton House and the Emerson House. Mary acknowledged the stone wall currently defines the perimeter of the north edge of the Meadow.

Joanne felt the Committee is not in a position to say it has met this goal or not. The relation to the Emerson House has deteriorated because the condition of the lot between the House and the Meadow (which belongs to the Ralph Waldo Emerson Memorial Association) has grown up. Susan suggested the Committee retain Goal 6 for the moment, but she wasn't sure what the Committee can do in an active sense to pursue it.

Cris asked if the Meadow had ever been hayed, to which Joanne replied there is photographic evidence it was hayed, and there was also a vegetable garden. Joanne and Susan agreed the intention is not to replant a vegetable garden or restore the root cellar, but Susan cautioned that if the Committee cherry picks what features it wants and what features it doesn't want, that will quickly lead to a slippery slope that she feels uncomfortable about. Joanne felt the only thing the Committee is cherry picking is apple trees. Susan used the height of the meadow as an example, and she described the difference between a "hayed" meadow and a "grazed" meadow, the latter being much rougher looking because the animals eat what they want and leave the remaining plants to grow, so the look is uneven. She feels the Committee may be falling victim to the imagery of a misty bucolic English meadow seen from a distance, whereas this is a meadow we see close up. Joanne referred back to Treatment Recommendations (top of page 20) which says "...a rehabilitation treatment would re-establish the appearance of the meadow to the greatest extent possible." She asked Delia if the Committee could try different grasses. Delia replied that existing grasses could be moved and different grasses could be planted, but she agreed with Nancy that what the Committee first needs is a holistic view of what it wants and the implementation would flow from there.

Mary recalled that the intent of the original group of people who fought to save the Meadow was indeed to create a romantic, idealistic, "soft" entrance to Concord, and perhaps it did harken back to a romantic English vista that would evoke the peace that people hope for. It was very aesthetic, she said. Mary felt the implementation decisions about type of grass, height of grass, etc. should be guided by what was fought for originally – a peaceful vista.

Nancy and Susan discussed the grasses that would have been found on the Meadow. Nancy felt there need not be a conflict between a peaceful, aesthetically appealing meadow and the use of native grasses, but Susan felt that native grasses would have been quickly overtaken by invasives as soon as sheep were introduced on the Meadow. Nancy recalled that English grasses were introduced fairly early, and English grasses could always be identified because they stayed green longer compared to native grasses which have a tendency to turn brown. When asked, Susan didn't feel there was a conflict, but just doesn't want to spend time pursuing some abstract ideal that isn't practical. Joanne encouraged the Committee to feel good about what it has done, but admitted this is where the biggest differences are within the Committee.

Mary asked Joanne to summarize what she thought the differences are among the views on the Committee. Joanne identified several areas of difference that the Committee needs to come to grips with: (i) whether to treat the east and west meadows the same, (ii) whether to make the east meadow look more like the west meadow, or (iii) the west meadow look more like the east meadow. She feels Mary, Sandy, perhaps Murray, and she have one vision, and others on the Committee have a different vision, and that it ultimately comes down to Goals 1, 2, and 6.

Susan articulated two potentially conflicting missions related to the Meadow – historic preservation and conservation - with conservation recently becoming more important within the Town, the Natural Resources Division, and with some of the Committee members, which leads to decision making which may not be completely consistent or cohesive. She identified mowing as the area where these differences are clearest. The Committee has tried to compromise, but that has left both sides unhappy.

Delia recalled how for several years the Lexington Road side of the path through the east Meadow was mowed more frequently than the Mill Brook side of the path, and she wondered if that might be the basis for compromise. Joanne indicated the complaints she has received are not focused on the east Meadow as much as the west Meadow. On the west Meadow, the grasses and other plants got so high you couldn't see from the west Meadow to the east Meadow. She suggested one approach could be to move the taller plants to the perimeter of the west Meadow, particularly along the west fence, and have lower plantings in the center which would restore the views. The two parts of the Meadow wouldn't have to be treated exactly the same, but she would like to be able to see from one to the other. Delia agreed with that viewpoint. She said someone walking down the steps quickly got the sense of being closed in by the height of the plants. Delia said some of that was due to lack of staff last summer (because of COVID-19), but she expects to have staff next summer and will be able to pull the artemisia and ragweed all summer. But she predicts the Committee will not ultimately be able to keep plants from moving around to where they're happiest in the Meadow. Susan offered the view that ironically, one of the factors contributing to the tall growth in the center of the west Meadow is that is where the soil is best, relative to the areas on the perimeter.

Cris asked Delia if the tall grasses could be moved to the perimeter of the Meadow so when people walk down the steps they don't feel like they're in a tunnel. Delia said transplanting the tall Indian grass in the summer would be challenging, but she is happy to try to move it to locations where it could provide screening as opposed to killing it. Nancy said she was still uncomfortable with the idea of the Committee trying to find places to put plants that it likes because it is not consistent with having an overall plan and a plant list and what would be acceptable from an overall aesthetic point of view or conservation point of view. Delia responded that the goal in recent years has been to increase the native biodiversity. The Committee could look back at Thoreau's journals to see if he has any reference to grasses or refer to Ray D'Angelo's work. Joanne recalled that the west Meadow looked very different before the wall work was done. All of the tall grasses came in because the west Meadow was so disturbed. After the wall work, fill was brought in, spread out and seeded by John Bordman with a subsequent seeding by Delia. As a result, it now has very different grasses than it did before. Nancy asked if the purple love grass would be pulled out, and was relieved when Delia responded "no" because Nancy knows it to be very vigorous, and tolerant of drought and sandy soil. She thought it might meet both criteria – not being all that high and yet being good habitat for insects and pollinators.

Mary suggested we might establish a goal to educate people about what they are seeing. She finds the discussion about different grasses fascinating and feels others would too, if only the Committee had the resources to develop an educational dimension to its efforts. Susan agreed, but said that because the Committee doesn't want to cover the Meadow with signs, perhaps there could be a Heywood Meadow blog. This would be a new dimension of the Committee's stewardship. Lola said the path that now goes all the way through the Meadow is another way it has been united.

Joanne felt that the Committee has found common ground around the idea of being able to see from one side to the other and has done so while allowing people to have the plantings they want to have. Susan agreed the discussion had been useful.

Lola asked if there were enough changes to the Goals to have them rewritten and voted on. Susan said that Sandy had put in the minutes of the last meeting, text of the two Goals (4 & 5) that she had rewritten. Mary raised the idea of some kind of bulletin board for educational purposes, like the one at

Punkatasset. Delia told the Committee she would need to see a plan, and the plan would need Historic Districts Commission approval. Most of the existing bulletin boards are at actual trailheads, and there isn't an obvious trailhead at Heywood Meadow, so the Committee would need to be thoughtful about placement and content. Joanne reminded the Committee the Plan doesn't recommend signs other than one identifying the Meadow itself. And there is a small sign at the entrance to the Emerson Thoreau Amble with maps. Delia likes the idea of a blog because anyone can update it, and it can have photos that change with the season. Cris asked about the sloped signs like the ones at Minute Man National Historical Park. Delia encouraged the Committee to think about what would need to go on a sign. Susan put in a plug for being able to register sightings of flora and fauna seen in the Meadow, and Lola suggested trying to work with the elementary schools to add a field trip to the Meadow to their list of outings. Joanne urged the Committee to get lots of pictures of the Meadow in different seasons up on the website and asked Cris to take the lead because she already has taken so many lovely pictures of the Meadow. Cris agreed to provide access to her albums, but doesn't want to be responsible for maintaining a blog. Joanne asked Delia if paintings by Pam Pettingill were available to post, but they are not available electronically. Nevertheless, Joanne asked Delia to start by posting on the website links to a couple of albums of photographs taken by Lola and Cris.

The Committee decided not to meet in February.

Mary moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:24am. The motion was seconded by Lola and passed unanimously by roll-call vote.